

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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A STERN CHASE.

A STORY IN THREE PARTS.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY.

THE SECOND PART.

CHAPTER IX. A STARTLING DEMAND.

THE accommodation afforded by The Goat Tavern to travellers, who required anything more than refreshment by the way, was limited and indifferent, consisting of a few small rooms with low ceilings, furnished in a poor and comfortless manner. Nevertheless, considering the shabby appearance of the stranger, and the fact that his travelling equipment consisted of a rusty and ancient leather hand-bag, he might have been a little less hard to please than he proved when he was introduced to one of those sleeping-rooms by the landlady, who regarded him with evident disfavour.

"Gave himself the airs of a lord; pulled the bed about; wondered we hadn't bought up old sails for sheets, when we were about it; and said he was not going to pay for light, and then be put off with an inch of candle. I tell you what, Rundle, he's one of them has-beens, and I just hate them."

Mr. Rundle, proprietor of The Goat, received the statement of his indignant wife with much philosophy. He had taken the precaution, relaxed only in case of satisfactory luggage, of making the stranger pay for his room beforehand; while, as for rudeness and unpleasantness, they had to be met with in business, and it was for Mrs. Rundle to put up with them.

"Very likely," he remarked; "but I shouldn't think as he's been very much."

The pair occupied themselves no more with their lodger, who, having discovered that among the other defects of the room, the lock of the door was useless, pulled

the bed out of its place and made a barricade of it, and seated himself on the far side of it, with the table between him and the one small window. He sat for some time in a moody attitude, with his legs stretched out, his arms crossed, and his dark eyebrows lowered in a stern frown over his close-set eyes, and when at length he changed his position, it was with a sharp, impatient movement, although his thoughts had become too irksome to be borne any longer. He flung his bag upon the table, and turned out its contents, muttering some disjointed sentences:

"I'm no harder-hearted than anybody else. What's in a dead woman to upset a man, when it's just the best thing that can happen to him that she should be dead, and a deuced good thing for her too? She would have given in in the end, of course, but she would have whined over it everlastingly."

Among the things in the bag—a change of linen and some toilet necessities of a cheap kind—were writing-materials. The stranger, having arranged these in front of the much-grudged candle, proceeded to use them in making memoranda from the written sheets which he had brought away from the cottage. This he did with consideration of each item as he recorded it on the sheet of paper before him, in a handwriting which would have confounded a hasty judgment of his place in the social system, formed from the shabbiness of his clothing and the evidence of the rusty leather bag. The handwriting was that of an educated man; it was of the kind that used to be called, twenty years ago, "the Oxford hand," neat, careful, characteristic; the memoranda were made in straight, evenly-spaced lines, and numbered in plain figures. He consumed a good deal of time in this occupation,

and, when he laid his pen aside, he read over what he had written, and, folding the paper up into a small space, he placed it in an old purse, which was in harmony with the rest of his equipment. There remained to be disposed of the packet of which he had possessed himself at the cottage, and how to do this evidently puzzled him.

"If anything should go wrong, these must not be come-at-able," he muttered, as he folded the written sheets of paper about the packet which he had found in the secret drawer of the desk; "they will be worth something in case of the worst, provided that nobody gets a chance of seeing them."

The rusty leather bag had a coarse holland lining, and he easily ripped enough of the stitching to enable him to poke the wedge of paper between the leather and this lining. He then dexterously worked it over to the other side, and fastened up the orifice with a pin. This done, he seemed to yield to some sort of discouragement, or it may have been to mere fatigue, for he sat with his head in his hands for several minutes, and then he said to himself:

"The rock ahead is that former letter to her friend. I would give a good deal to know what was in that letter. I must risk it, however. Nothing venture, nothing win."

Having drunk some spirits - and - water from a flask, he lay down, only partially undressed, on the outside of the justly-despised bed; wrapped the coarse coverlet round him; and was soon sleeping as soundly as though the day had brought to pass nothing that was foreign to his experience.

Contrary to custom, the front gate of Lislee was locked when the stranger came to it on the following day before noon. He had been careful to ask his way of Rundle, the landlord of The Goat, and had grumblingly harked back on his grievance of the day before. He was annoyed to find the gate locked, and himself exposed to question there; but, to his surprise, the tidy woman who came out of the lodge at the summons of the bell, admitted him, after a glance at his bag, without enquiry, merely saying:

"You'll be from Phillips's. Ah, it's a sad affair!"

He had no notion of her meaning, but he took ready advantage of her mistake,

and passed on with a nod. There was no one about in the avenue, and in the porch lay the large Newfoundland dog, at which the stranger had shaken his fist the day before as he passed the kennel at the stables. The dog recognised him, rose, and growled. The man, strangely disconcerted, hesitated to advance, whereupon the dog, struggling between the restraints of education and an ardent desire to attack him, barked furiously. The front-door was opened by an elderly man, with grey hair and a sunbrowned face, who first spoke to the dog, and then looked round to see what had excited his suspicion and anger, for Colonel Courtland was accustomed to interpret Cæsar's barks, and knew those were the sentiments he desired to express. He, too, mistook the stranger for someone who was expected to call at the house. He, too, glanced at the rusty leather bag.

"Pray come in," said the Colonel; "you need not be afraid of the dog. I presume you come from Phillips's?"

By this time the stranger had entered the hall, and a servant making his appearance from the regions beyond, the Colonel was about to consign the supposed local tradesman's assistant to his care, when he was prevented by the man's saying:

"No, I do not; I don't know what you mean by Phillips's. I have come to see Colonel Courtland on business. I presume you are the Colonel?"

His tone was perfectly cool and self-possessed, and Colonel Courtland at once perceived the discrepancy between his manner of speech and his appearance.

"Excuse me," he said gravely, for some irritation mingled with his surprise, "I had given directions that only certain persons were to be admitted to-day, and I concluded you were one of those whom I am expecting. There is trouble in the house, and I had not intended to see anyone. I suppose the business to which you allude is not pressing, and can be postponed?"

These sentences were uttered in the Colonel's coldest tones, for the stranger's aspect did not please him, and he had heard him use the word "business" with a misgiving which formed itself into: "Can it be some scrape of Julian's the man has come about?" The two were still in the hall, the Colonel having made no move towards a sitting-room, and through the still open door a man in shabby black clothes, and carrying a small

leather-bag, was seen approaching the house.

"That person is the undertaker's man, no doubt," said Colonel Courtland to the servant; "you had better go and speak to him. Now, sir, as I am much occupied—"

"My business—for you are right in supposing that I have come here on my own account," said the stranger in a tone which was unpleasant without being exactly insolent, "may be very briefly dismissed, but it cannot be postponed. My name is James Willesden; my wife is living here, and I have come to see her. Be so good as to enable me to do so, and I need intrude on you no longer."

"It is the man from Phillips's, sir," said the servant, interposing, as the Colonel recoiled slightly. "Shall I send him round to the cottage?"

"Yes. Excuse me for a moment," said Colonel Courtland, addressing the stranger, who turned on his heel and looked about the hall with perfect unconcern. "Come here, Saunders."

The servant followed him out on the steps, and received directions to go with the man from Phillips's to the cottage, and to send Mrs. Courtland, whom he would find there, back to the house without delay.

"Tell her," added the Colonel, "that I request she will go into the morning-room, and stay there until I come. Say that there is nothing to alarm her, but that I must see her at once."

He then rejoined the stranger, whom he took into a small room off the hall.

A slight smile moved the man's thin lips as the Colonel invited him to take a seat, and he complied without a word. There was a mock patience in his attitude, which might have angered Colonel Courtland had his own embarrassment been less. It was impossible to prolong the silence. He was forced to speak.

"I hope," he said, "you will believe that there is no intentional offence in my saying that your statement surprises me very much, and that circumstances—within my own knowledge—prevent me from accepting it without confirmation."

"I see," said the stranger, without the slightest apparent irritation; "that is her game, is it? You hide her, and when I demand to see her, you say: 'Prove your identity, and your right'. I have no right to demand to be brought into the presence of a woman who denies that she is my wife,

it is true; but perhaps, as the information I have received is full and clear on every point, you will think it wise and well, for the sake of all concerned, to ask the person who lives in the cottage in your grounds, which is commonly called Convalescent Cottage, and who is known as Mrs. Willesden, whether the original of this photograph is or is not her husband. Her answer will convince you that I have a right to see her."

"Allow me to put that aside for the present," said the Colonel, taking the photograph from the stranger's hand, but laying it on the table without glancing at it; "and, again assuring you that no offence is intended, to ask you what information you have received about the residence of a Mrs. Willesden here, and, supposing her to be the person for whom you take her, for what purpose you have come?"

The stranger smiled, not so slightly or so passingly as before.

"I am in no way bound to answer either of your questions," he replied, "but as it will save trouble, I don't mind doing it. I got the information I wanted in the regular way, by paying for it. I don't look much like a person who can afford the luxury of seeing detectives; but it happens to suit me just now to know where my wife is, and I require to see her on business; therefore I spent the necessary money. As for what I learned, it was of a harmless, satisfactory kind. My wife had been so fortunate as to enlist the sympathies of a philanthropic person, who, some six months ago, recommended her as a candidate for the cottage in your grounds, which you set apart for the occupation of invalid ladies of the class which is politely called 'reduced'. An excellent charity indeed."

What could that motive be which enabled Colonel Courtland to control his anger and disgust? A very strong one, surely, for the cynical insolence of the stranger's tone was unrestrained in these latter sentences.

"In answering your first question, I have, as you see, answered your second. Come, Colonel Courtland, let us have done with this fencing and foolery; it is mere waste of time. You entertain no doubt whatever that the Mrs. Willesden who lives in your cottage is my wife, and you are too wise to get into trouble by putting any difficulty in the way of my seeing her. You will scarcely allow yourself to be

influenced by anything which she may have said of me—"

"Mrs. Willesden never said anything either good or bad of her husband," interrupted the Colonel hurriedly ("Exactly what I wanted to know," said the stranger to himself); "except that he was, to the best of her belief, living, but had deserted her."

"Temporarily—that is true; and I shall not intrude explanations and excuses upon you. Those which I shall make to her, I have no doubt she will accept."

Again he smiled, with a covert enjoyment of the repulsion to be read in Colonel Courtland's face. At this moment the Colonel heard footsteps crossing the hall, and knew that his wife had obeyed his summons. He rose, and with a change of manner which his habitual languor rendered remarkable, he said:

"I must decline further discussion with you. If you will remain here you shall have my decision without delay."

Colonel Courtland then left the room.

The stranger's smile expanded into a broad grin, and he leaned back in his chair, and stretched his legs out.

"It will take these good fools some time to settle how the shock to my heart and my conscience is to be dealt," he said to himself; "and I may as well await it in what comfort I can. I have not done badly so far. In the first place, it is not known that anything happened yesterday; if it were, a suspicion of me would have been instantly suggested; and the quince-coloured Colonel has none. Secondly, I know that she has held her tongue to the last. Stay, though!" some thought came to him so sharply that he sat up, and struck his clenched hands upon the sides of the chair. "What if she has told her story to one of her cursed priests, and left a charge to him? What if she has been having what their pernicious cant calls 'the consolations of religion'? This ex-military muff is just the conscientious idiot to take care of that, and once again I may find one of the black gentry in my way. I must find this out before I venture to put one foot before another in the business. How to do it, is the question."

He thought for some minutes, and then the intent frown which knit his brow was relaxed.

"I have it," he muttered, "My regret and self-reproach are only to be mitigated by the assurance that she died 'fortified with the rites of the Church'."

The door of the Colonel's study was

opened, and a lady entered the room. The stranger rose and bowed. He did it well; there was nothing of the tramp about him at that moment. The lady—a dignified and elegant person of five-and-forty, with snow-white hair and remarkably bright eyes—having returned his salute by one which was both solemn and stately, advanced towards him slowly. Coming to the chair that had been occupied by the Colonel, she placed her folded hands upon the back of it.

"Colonel Courtland tells me," she began, in a tone so grave and penetrating that it moved even the stranger's hardihood to something like discomposure, "that you claim to be the husband of Mrs. Willesden. I do not doubt your assertion; for I know that she believed her husband to be living, and you could have gained nothing by a pretence which she could have exposed in a moment. What is now the case occupies my husband's mind so fully—I am Mrs. Courtland" (the stranger bowed again, and did it well this time also)—"that he forgot what existed until yesterday, and that a false claim on your part would then have been a useless folly."

"May I ask, madam, why to-day I might make, with a chance of success, a false claim which yesterday must have been defeated?"

"Because," she replied with a slightly quivering lip, "yesterday your wife was living; to-day she is dead."

"Dead! Good God!"

He started back as if she had struck him, and he did it very well.

"Pray be seated, and I will tell you all we know of this sad event."

He leaned forward in his chair with his elbow on his knee, and his forehead supported by the palm of his left hand. She could not see his face distinctly, but his attitude was profoundly attentive, and he did not interrupt her by a word.

"When you ascertained where Mrs. Willesden was, you must also have known that she was in delicate health. She has been very ill for a long time, and the friend who recommended her case to us, on the occasion of the Convalescent Cottage becoming vacant, entertained little hope of her life when she brought her here. It was not, however, until three weeks ago, when her heart became seriously affected, that Dr. Fuller despaired of her recovery. At that time he informed us of his fears, and also told her that although he did not anticipate anything immediate, she must not look for restoration."

The stranger raised his head for a moment, and she paused, thinking he was about to speak; but he again covered his eyes with his hand in silence.

"No day passed without my seeing her. Colonel Courtland also visited her daily. We regarded her as a dear friend. A confidential servant of ours had the charge of her. Two days ago we left home on a visit to friends at a short distance. We saw her just before we started for Middleton Hall; she was pretty well, and at her urgent request I consented that the woman who waited on her should leave her for a few hours yesterday, to join in the entertainments at the Hall. A girl was engaged to wait on her for the day. At eleven o'clock yesterday morning Dr. Fuller saw her; she was then up, and going, she told him, to write letters."

He interrupted her for the first time.

"May I ask, madam, whether she was much in the habit of writing?"

"Certainly not, to my knowledge. So far as that goes, the friend who recommended her to us was her only correspondent."

"May I be informed of the name of this lady?"

"I think not—I fear not," answered Mrs. Courtland, reluctantly but firmly. "I have reason to believe that it would not be agreeable to her to be brought into communication with——"

"With the husband of Mrs. Willesden. I understand. Pray pardon the interruption, madam, and proceed."

"I saw Dr. Fuller at Middleton Hall in the afternoon, and he told me of his visit to the cottage. I saw the servant at a later hour, and learnt that she had left Mrs. Willesden very comfortable, to use the woman's own words. In the evening our coachman, who had returned to Lisle with the other servants, came back to Middleton Hall, and told us of the fearfully sudden death of Mrs. Willesden. The event must have occurred after four o'clock in the afternoon, for at that hour the girl left in charge of her went into the room, and found her sleeping. An hour later she went in again; something in Mrs. Willesden's appearance alarmed her. She ran to the house, brought back with her a servant who had remained at home, and they then discovered the truth. She was lying back in her chair, dead; there was no look of pain upon her face; she had evidently passed away without a struggle."

Mrs. Courtland ceased to speak. The stranger rose. His countenance was composed to a proper solemnity, which was not overdone.

"I thank you, madam," he said formally, "for giving me these details, and I beg you to satisfy me on one more point. You are, of course, aware that my wife was a Catholic?"

"And of a Spanish family. Yes, I am aware of that."

"She would naturally be anxious to have the ministrations of her own Church. I should be glad to know that she had this consolation."

Mrs. Courtland began to dislike the stranger less than at first. It was, at least, a good trait in him that he should remember his wife's wishes, on a point which Mrs. Courtland could not suppose to be of any moment to him.

"I regret deeply that she has not had any opportunities of that kind. There is no Catholic church within many miles of Choughton. If there were, she would have been unable to attend it."

"But she might have seen a priest at home. Are you sure she didn't?"

He spoke a little too eagerly, a little too roughly. Mrs. Courtland answered coldly:

"I am quite sure. Mrs. Willesden was free to see anybody for whom she wished to send. Colonel Courtland and Dr. Fuller discussed the matter only two days ago, when they decided upon asking her whom she had been in the habit of seeing before she came here, and proposing to send for the person she should name. But the end came before this could be done."

"I'm in for a run of luck," thought the stranger. "This makes it plain sailing."

"I thank you, madam," was his only spoken comment on this valuable bit of information.

"I presume," resumed Mrs. Courtland, "that you will wish to go to the cottage? I am desired by Colonel Courtland to say that he will take you there now, if you please. I shall send him to you. Good-morning!"

She moved to the door.

"Stay one moment, madam, I beg of you. Let me say a few more words. I am, as you see, in very poor circumstances. The ill-luck which led, I most solemnly assure you, to my apparent desertion of my wife, by making it totally impossible for me to maintain her, still sticks to me. I am not in a position to bear any of the

charges consequent upon her death. I must beg you to explain this to Colonel Courtland."

She gave him one glance of supreme contempt as she said :

"No demand of the sort will be made upon you."

Then she left him to meditate upon this further development of his luck.

"Oh, what a man!" exclaimed Mrs. Courtland, as she rejoined the Colonel in the morning-room. "It is hateful to be obliged to allow him to look at her dead face. I feel as if it must disturb her."

"It is well for her that it is her dead face he has to see," said the Colonel, "for that he meant her no good by coming here, we may be sure."

"I suppose we may. He has not behaved ill; he was quite respectful to me, but anything like his callousness I never witnessed. He showed but one trace of human feeling: it was in asking me whether she had seen a priest of her own Church. Then I did not hate him quite so much for a minute; but oh, he was so odious afterwards!"

She ran rapidly over what the stranger had said about expenses consequent on his wife's death, and told how she had reassured him.

"Of course—of course," said the Colonel impatiently, "I only wish he had come a little later, when all was over. This sort of thing is disturbing. And yet, after all," he added, pausing on his way to the door, to give expression to his characteristic fair-mindedness, "it is one of the products of poverty, and we have no right to judge it harshly."

In a few moments, Mrs. Courtland saw the stranger and the Colonel pass under the windows of the morning-room. The stranger was carrying his rusty leather-bag; so she concluded that the Colonel had not invited him to return to the house, and she felt strangely relieved. She had strong nerves and sound sense, but the occurrences of the last two days had tried her a good deal.

The story of the dead woman's marriage was a sealed book, and must remain so. The Colonel's wife had never been curious to learn it. Disappointment, poverty, ill-treatment, desertion, made the sum of it, no doubt. It was only since she had seen the man who had inflicted these ills upon the beautiful young woman whose enigmatical life closed yesterday, that Mrs.

Courtland had thought of its possible details. She sat at the window pondering upon these things, and with the vision of the white, restful face before her eyes; until she stopped herself by a sudden recollection, and said aloud:

"How strange! He never asked a question about the child!"

PEASANT PROPRIETORS.

It may be assumed that every person who takes an interest in the burning public questions of the day is to some extent familiar with the general outlines of what is called "the Land Question". It is much too large a question to deal with in one article, and too political in most of its aspects for the pages of this journal, but there is one phase of it in which we hope to interest our readers. It is that which embraces the project of creating a peasant-proprietary in this country. There is a wide interval between such a proposition, and that for the "nationalisation of the land"—a somewhat barbarous phrase which does not always mean the same thing. Mr. Henry George's "nationalisation", for instance, is a different thing from Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace's, but for neither is the nation prepared. On the other hand there is a species of communism projected, with which the name of Mr. Chamberlain is directly associated—not because he was the first to conceive and to advocate the idea, but because he has made it a prominent "plank" in his political "platform".

This modified communism is, in brief, the proposal called the "allotment system"—a proposal that local authorities should be empowered to purchase land compulsorily at fair valuations, and to let it out in small holdings, or sell it in small parcels, on such terms as they may arrange, to peasant occupiers. This is the first practical proposal of a national kind towards the establishment of a peasant-proprietary. We propose, therefore, to enquire into the nature of the thing thus proposed to be introduced into our economy, and to show something of its existence in other countries.

In the region of peasant properties, as John Stuart Mill puts it, the whole produce belongs to a single owner, and the distinction of rent, profits, and wages does not exist. In other words, the owner of the land works it himself—it may be, with the

assistance of his own family, but generally without hired labour of any kind. The profits of working it are entirely his own, and are subject only to the due proportion of the public burdens of the country to which all citizens are liable.

Whether there is an advantage both to the community and to individuals in small properties in land, as opposed to great estates, is a point upon which English economists have never agreed. It is one, also, which has not been practically tested with us sufficiently to furnish data. In some isolated parts of the kingdom—as, for instance, in Cumberland—there has been for years, perhaps for centuries, something approaching to a peasant proprietary; but the general system of English cultivation, as Mill says, affords no experience to render the nature and operations of peasant properties familiar, and therefore it is that to most of us, unacquainted with the agricultural life of foreign countries, the very idea of peasant proprietors appears strange.

Mill's enquiry into the direct operation and indirect influences of peasant properties on the Continent, led him to the conclusions that "there is no necessary connection between this form of landed property and an imperfect state of the arts of production; that it is favourable in quite as many respects as it is unfavourable, to the most effective use of the powers of the soil; that no other existing state of agricultural economy has so beneficial an effect on the industry, the intelligence, the frugality, and prudence of the population, nor tends, on the whole, so much to discourage an improvident increase of their numbers; and that no existing state, therefore, is on the whole so favourable, both to their moral and their physical welfare." But Mill is decided in saying that the effect of small properties, cultivated by peasant proprietors, is only admirable when they are not too small. Unless they are large enough to occupy the whole time and attention of the family, they are provocative of idleness and many other evils. For each peasant to have, even as his own absolute property, a patch of land which is not sufficient to support him in comfort, would be, thought this eminent economist, "a system with all the disadvantages and scarcely any of the benefits of small properties; since he must either live in indigence on the produce of his land, or depend, as habitually as if he had no landed possessions, on the wages of hired labour;

which, besides, if all the holdings surrounding him are of similar dimensions, he has little prospect of finding."

Now this is a qualification which does not seem to be duly weighed by all who are advocating the creation of a peasant proprietary, and the very allotment system which Mr. Chamberlain proposes seems to be in the very direction which ought to be most carefully avoided, namely, the over subdivision of the land. Surely, no words are needed to prove the evils of such a system when we have before us the condition of the Highland crofters. It is true that these crofters are not proprietors of their holdings; but it is also true that it is not, in most cases, the rent which constitutes their hardship. It is the extreme subdivision of the crofts, so that, were they rent-free, they could not support in decency the families crowded upon them.

Now as to the general question of peasant farming, let us come to what a writer of our own time, Mr. Arthur Arnold, has recorded of its actual practice. This gentleman spent some time in the Channel Islands, with the express object of studying the question in places where peasant properties actually exist, and this is the substance of what he found.

The soil of Jersey is not of uniformly good quality, and, although the winter is as mild as that of the Isle of Wight, it is less mild than that of parts of the west coast of Great Britain; nevertheless, the agricultural prosperity of the island surpasses even the high expectations which Mr. Arnold had formed. The price of land is very much higher in Jersey than in England, the farms are small compared with English farms, and the farmer is in most cases the proprietor. But the average yield, in produce, Mr. Arnold declares to be greatly above the English average. The agricultural classes are comfortably off, and even prosperous, and native pauperism is unknown. Why? Let Mr. Arnold answer: "Jersey is prosperous because the people have free land; because, with insignificant exceptions, the land is saleable; because insolvency is followed by sale; and the price is high because there are many buyers; the small capitalist who can make ten per cent. on his purchase-money is not driven away by fear of delay and the cost of law, to make way for the buyer who will give only half as much and make only three per cent." This, so far, seems more an argument in favour of "free land" than of peasant proprietary, and by free land in

Jersey Mr. Arnold means that transfer by registration is simple and common. There are no doubtful "titles" to investigate, and no heavy costs of conveyancing to pay. Further, extreme sub-division is prevented by the law which debars a proprietor from devising land to whom he will. His wife and each of his children must have a portion, if the estate exceeds an acre and a half, but the eldest has the power of purchasing out the other inheritors by payment of annuities. The principal and the most profitable crops of the island are potatoes and live stock; and machinery, such as steam-ploughs, etc., is largely employed by the farmers on the co-operative principle. Here, then, we perceive certain favourable conditions—suitability of climate for peculiarly profitable branches of farming, and co-operation—which might ensure prosperity to Jersey even without peasant proprietary. The same remarks apply also to Guernsey.

The argument from the case of the Channel Islands is that were land "free" in England—free, that is, from the restrictions of primogeniture, entail, settlement, and the onerous costs of transfer under the present system—there would be a class of peasant proprietors, who would buy the land at higher prices than are now common. The reply to this is, that peasant proprietors would probably be eager purchasers for a time, but that, the conditions of agriculture in the country at large not being favourable to small farming, the peasant proprietor might pay more in his eagerness to own than the land can repay him. In other words, he needs capital, besides spade-husbandry, to make farming profitable, and if he puts too much of his capital into the land he has too little to work it—like a man who expends all his money in buying a big house, and has not sufficient left to furnish it.

The case of Flanders is always cited as an illustration of the benefits of peasant proprietorship, and there, it is stated, the small farms own more cattle, yield more produce, and are more carefully cultivated than the large farms. "I have seen in Belgium," says Mr. Arnold, "women scratching with their fingers fair crops of potatoes from nearly white sand—a miracle of agricultural industry, of thrift, and of perseverance, such as belongs only to peasant proprietorship."

In France, again, it is said that agricultural land fetches a higher price than in England, and that the largest clear produce

and the best cultivation are, on the whole, that of the peasant proprietors. M. de Laveleye asserts positively that the richest and most productive provinces in France are those in which the small landowners are in a majority, and Mr. Cliffe Leslie, in the chapter he contributes to the volume on the Systems of Land Tenure of Various Countries, published by the Cobden Club, has much to say in the same direction. The reply to all this, fairly enough, is, that France is not England, and that in France there are special circumstances of soil and climate—associated with vine-growing, fruit-culture, and the like—which render the country appropriate to "la petite culture". A peasant proprietor in France can, on ten acres of land, make ends meet, and put a little into the family "stocking" every year, but it does not follow that a peasant proprietor of ten acres in England could do the same. It is all very well to urge market-gardening; but the demand for garden-produce is not limitless, and is already abundantly supplied, partly at home, but mostly from foreign countries more bountifully qualified by Nature for the purpose.

One of the evils of the French land-system is the extreme subdivision of the land, which prevails in consequence of the law of succession—a law which limits the parental power of testamentary disposition over property to a part equal to one child's share, and divides the remainder among the children equally. But this subdivision by inheritance is counteracted, in Mr. Cliffe Leslie's opinion, by the operation of the law of transfer. The effect of this is to promote a continual alteration in the distribution of the soil among the population, and the most marked feature of the movement is the continual purchase by the peasantry of small estates, or parcels of land. The object in life of a peasant who inherits a small plot, is to labour and save until he can gradually add to his holding. This, assuredly, is not in itself a mean ambition, and if the introduction of a peasant proprietary into England would at the same time introduce the industry, the sobriety, and the thrift of the French peasant cultivator, without his vices, there is good reason to desire it.

As regards the economic aspects of the French system, these are clearly set forth by Mr. Cliffe Leslie, and may be thus summarised. The sale and purchase of land is burdened by costs, which are often complained of, but the transaction is simple;

and, in spite of these costs, of higher relative prices than in England, of high taxation, and the competition of public loans and other investments, the peasant is still the great land-buyer of the country. Then, the system of title and registration of mortgages is so sound that a peasant proprietor can expeditiously and safely raise money on his property to enable him to buy or to farm adjoining land; and the effect of this, Mr. Cliffe Leslie contends, has been, not to add to the encumbrances on land, but to bring land into the hands of those who can make most of it.

Thus far one side of the question. Now let us see what some recent observers have to say. Lady Verney, who lately published two interesting volumes of essays on this subject, shows a considerable difference between the actual life of peasant proprietors in France and that described by the idealists. After describing the minute subdivision and separation observable in parts, she says: "We found everywhere that the waste of time, labour, and money in tilling these small morsels was excessive when each has to be cultivated, manured, weeded, and ploughed separately." In what respect are the people better off, she asks, than they would have been by hiring land in England? "We never saw the smallest flower near or in any house of all the many we visited; not so much as the wallflower or nasturtium, which abound even in ragged hovels in England; not a white jessamine or China-rose against the wall. Flowers are considered things to sell, like onions, in the nursery-gardens near Royat and Clermont, where the roses are hawked in bunches about the streets; a few are grown between the haricots and the carrots. Not a paper or book was ever to be found; not a print or picture against any wall; and not a bit of china, not an ornament, not a piece of good furniture, or a clock, such as is the pride of an English cottage, was to be seen. It was impossible to conceive life so absolutely bare of interest, or amusement, or comfort, or refinement of any kind."

Then as to the much-talked-of "thrift", Lady Verney comments: "In England thrift appears to be a great virtue—one to be inculcated on every occasion upon our people. Here one hates the very mention of it. It is an end; they do not work to live, they live for the sake of working to lay by; they grudge every penny they spend, even for the most important neces-

saries. . . The sordid, unclean, hideous existence which is the result of all this saving and self-denial—repulsive absence of any ideal but that of 'de cacher de petits sous dans de grands bas' as an object for life, is incredible if it is not seen and studied. There is so great a jealousy of any man rising above the rest, that the equality in the villages is nearly absolute, and the level of taste and civilisation sinks to the capacity of the lowest; any advance on this is regarded as pride and absurdity."

In this connection, Mr. Frank E. Ballard has pointed out, in a letter to the Times, that the success or otherwise of the French system depends upon the farmer's wife. She it is who does most of the work—hoeing turnips, mowing grass, reaping corn—no matter how heavy or how fatiguing the labour. Sometimes the men gossip while their wives work, but more generally they find employment elsewhere. Success on small holdings is only attained by this division of labour, and this, as well as the law of succession, is necessarily against an increase in the population. Families, as a rule, are small, and Lady Verney found about Lyons two children more common than three in a household.

Another writer says: "An English tenant can hardly imagine the intense industry, the severe drudgery, of the small French proprietor. Female labour is everywhere the rule. From morning till night every member of the family is toiling at hand-labour in the fields; the food is of the worst description, and the sole object of life is to save. Nothing is spent on books or newspapers, or anything out of the dull routine. Brought up in the deepest ignorance, the French rural population give no assistance in public affairs, and degenerate into the puppets of politicians or officials."

In Germany the peasant proprietor presents some features different from those observed in France, and his position—in Prussia in especial, but more or less so in all the German states—is somewhat complicated one. The old German land system had a strong flavour of our own old Anglo-Saxon system. Each agricultural district, or Mark, consisted of three parts—the Common Mark, which was the equivalent to the Folkland of the Anglo-Saxons, owned possibly by the community; the Arable Mark, or Feldmark, which was cut out of the Common Mark, and apportioned in equal lots among the community; and

the Township, or Dorf Mark, also divided in equal lots among the community. The farmer was thus a threefold being: he was a joint-proprietor of the common land, an allottee of the arable land, and an individual proprietor in his own township. But with the introduction of the feudal system, a gradual change occurred; population increased, so that more townships were settled on the common land, and the free-man was gradually reduced to the bare ownership of his own individual lot. The pressure of wars and poverty completed the transformation of the free owner to the unfree holder. But the efforts and the effects of Prussian legislation in the present century have been towards restoring, with modifications, the original system—to return to “free ownership with unequal possession”. It is beyond our scope to go into the historical and political course of the German land system, but, broadly, it may be said that “the distinguishing characteristic is the transition of some forms of feudal tenure and mediæval agriculture to those of undivided landownership, and individual in contra-distinction to joint cultivation.”

Now let us take a look at the state of Hesse, because there it is said that two-thirds of the land under cultivation is owned by peasant proprietors, and that thirteen-fifteenths of the arable land is under peasant cultivation. The land occupied by tenants is held directly from proprietors, either in large farms by professional agriculturists, or in small parcels by peasants who cultivate them along with their own lots—sub-tenants being regarded as an unmitigated evil.

According to Mr. Morier, who reported to our Foreign Office on the subject in 1870, the peasant proprietor is member of a rural commune, having the characteristics of both a private corporation holding property, and of a public body with administrative powers. It is governed by a common council and burgomaster; and the peasant proprietor has public duties as well as private rights. The holdings vary much in size, and in some parts subdivision has been excessive. Usually the proprietors live together in a township or village pretty closely crowded. As an instance of a typically flourishing commune, Mr. Morier cites one near the Rhine, and some six miles from Mannheim. There the holder of a plot too small to keep him, and who has to work for daily wages during a part of the year, is

tolerably comfortable, well housed, and well-fed. But the holders of lots of from ten to thirty morgens (four and three-quarter morgens are equal to about ten acres) are not so well off, the land taking up all their time, while not yielding a margin above bare subsistence. Nevertheless the township, as a commune, is prosperous, and is even able, out of the common funds, to help families occasionally to emigrate to America. The commune was marked by an absence of squalor, but also by a low standard of civilisation. In a commune in the Odenwald, again, Mr. Morier found larger individual holdings and smaller common property, where the whole appearance was one of dilapidation, discomfort, and poverty. Even the richest among the proprietors was no better, in style of living and in civilisation, than the hired ploughmen and shepherds. A significant fact in this connection is that a large proportion of the regular emigrants from Germany is composed of the peasant-proprietor class. A very common thing on the death of a head of a family is for the children, instead of dividing the land, to sell it, and with the proceeds betake themselves to America.

With regard to Prussia, it is to be noted that within the last quarter of a century a great change has come over the industries of the country. Prior to 1860, it is computed that between forty and forty-five per cent. of the entire population lived by agriculture; but now the population is mainly engaged in manufacturing industries, while the peasant proprietors continue to emigrate as above stated. Further, the tendency in Prussia seems to be for land to pass into the hands of large owners, who let it on rent, for in 1870 there were sixty thousand seven hundred and thirty-nine tenant-farmers as against one million one hundred and eleven thousand one hundred and seventeen proprietors, and the proportion of the former is said to be now much increased. And even where peasant-proprietary is in full force, its effects are not altogether admirable. Take, for instance, this picture from the official report of Mr. Harriß-Gastrell on the land systems of the North German Confederation: “The continued evil of the idle landlord and the niggardly parishioner are too often reproduced in such peasant-landlords. They live in idleness, and waste pitifully their time. The peasant-landlord is not only above labour, but also above trade. The large peasant, with a landlord’s

income of a thousand pounds a year, lives plainly, ignores education, despises intellectual activity, looks with contempt on other labour, and hoards his savings. The small peasant, who lets his land, is too proud to do any work, except that of a proprietary farmer, and, having ceded for rent his opportunity of so working, lives idly upon the rent, instead of turning his attention and labour to some other object. Both, however, turn their attention to the object of making the local expenditure, especially for the schoolmaster, as niggardly as possible. Living upon rent does not improve the peasant's political ideas."

M. Emile de Laveleye contributed to the Cobden Club Essays a most interesting paper on the land system of Belgium and Holland, the object of which is to show the superior condition of small farming both by peasant proprietors and by peasant cultivators. But it would appear that the prosperity of the agricultural classes of these countries is less the result of the system, than of the industry and technical skill of the cultivators. Such, at least, is our impression, after a careful study of M. de Laveleye's paper; and as regards the land system, it would seem that one of the most prosperous classes is that which enjoys a tenure in the Low Countries known as the *Beklem-regt*, which may be defined as an hereditary lease, with fixity of tenure and absolute tenant right. But even M. de Laveleye admits that peasant properties cultivated by the proprietors are only excellent when they do not exist in the same district as leasehold farms; and then again he compares the Flemish small farmer who cultivates his own land, not with the English tenant-farmer, but with the English farm-labourer. The disadvantage in Flanders, he considers, consists in there being too many small tenants and too few small proprietors.

In Belgium there is a large peasant proprietary, as well as extensive landlordism. The Belgians possess all the qualifications for successful agriculture on a small scale, and they have practised "high farming" for generations. The country is full of large towns, and has a very complete railway system, so that everything is in favour of the small farmer. But yet, with all these advantages, we are assured by a recent well-informed correspondent of the Times that the social state of the rural population is not to be envied. "The extreme subdivision of land," he says, "entails continuous toil,

and complaints are made that excessive agricultural toil is a serious impediment to education. As in France, also, land-jobbing is universal. The 'land-sharks' of Belgium are apparently more numerous than in any other country, and far more tyrannical. With facilities of purchasing, land has fallen into the hands of unscrupulous, greedy persons, seeking only their own interests, and instigated solely by motives of gain in their dealings. The result is minute subdivision." Farmers are thus liable to have several landlords at the same time. One, a brewer, expects the tenants to drink his beer, and evicts him if he does not; another, a grocer, requires his custom; another, a haberdasher, the same; and so on. This same writer says that whereas the most highly cultivated land in Belgium is almost entirely worked by tenants, the poor land of Luxembourg is cultivated solely by peasant proprietors.

We might pursue our enquiries into other countries, but to do so would prolong our paper to undue length. We may, therefore, sum up in conclusion.

In the countries where peasant proprietary exists as a system, it has been a gradual and a natural growth. That it has always been a healthy one, we have seen that there is some reason to doubt. It may be that the pictures of the degraded condition of the peasant proprietors are to some extent exaggerated; but, on the other hand, it is certain that the fancy pictures which have been drawn by our own "three acres and a cow" theorists, are purely imaginary and delusive. It is at least open to doubt if the peasant proprietary system, even where it appears at its best, has been anywhere an unqualified success, either socially, morally, or commercially. What reason, then, is there to suppose that the artificial creation of peasant proprietors by legislation in our own country will be any more of a success?

Firstly, we have not the sunny skies and long summers of France and Belgium, and therefore are debarred from certain cultivation which is the most profitable part of "la petite culture"; secondly, ours is an increasing and fruitful, not a stationary population; thirdly, our national tastes and habits are opposed to the slavish labour and penurious habits of the French peasant; and, fourthly, our soil and climate are best suited for farming on a large scale, and with the application of great capital. All the productiveness claimed for the peasant-

farms of France and the Low Countries does not alter the fact that English farmers raise more wheat to the acre than those of any other country in the world.

At best, then, we find that, while the system of peasant proprietary has been attended with beneficial results in some countries, these countries are lands of sunshine and market-gardens, and that, even with regard to them, the benefits of the system have been greatly exaggerated. What Judge Longfield said, a few years ago, with regard to Ireland, is capable of application to the whole kingdom. "It is not a man's interest in Ireland," said Judge Longfield, "to be a peasant proprietor," nor will it be, as we think, in England. Every peasant, no doubt, would like to be a proprietor, but, once a proprietor, he would not want to remain a peasant.

CHRONICLES OF ENGLISH COUNTIES.

SUSSEX. PART I.

MUCH of the ancient character of the weald of Sussex, as part of the great forest of Anderida, is still to be traced in its woodland scenery. Wherever from the hills that shut in this great woodland district you look down upon the Sussex weald, with churches, hamlets, mansions, and parks without number, these have the appearance of so many clearings in the great wood, which some day may again close in upon them and cover them up.

Possibly, indeed, the forest may even now claim the victory, and show, against clearings here and there, whole tracts that were once the seat of a busy industry, now covered with trees and underwood. For, difficult as it is to realise the fact, yet we must give credit to the undoubted records of a time when here was the chief seat of the iron manufacture of the kingdom, and when, from these quiet wooded hills, arose the thin smoke of countless furnaces and forges. A thin cloud, indeed, not to be compared with the murky reek of the black countries, for the forests themselves furnished the only fuel, and the comparatively delicate processes of smelting and forging by charcoal fires brought no such desolation to the face of Nature as the ironworks of modern times.

The origin of the ironworks of the weald dates, probably, to pre-Roman times. Anyhow, there were guilds of ironworkers who carried on their art and mystery

during the Roman ascendancy in Britain, and we may trace obscure allusions to those ironworkers during the centuries of Saxon rule. Everywhere along the line of the forest ridge, where the ore was most plentiful, are to be found traces of ancient workings, and probably the furnace-fires were never entirely extinct through all the changes and troubles of the south Saxon land, till the last of them was extinguished at some time later on in the eighteenth century. The best ore was found in the Wadhurst clay, and was got with little trouble by sinking shafts of no great depth or extent. When the stratum of ore was exhausted, the shaft was filled up and another sunk not far off, and thus the ground was gradually cleared. Perhaps the iron manufacture was at its greatest height in the reign of Elizabeth, when many families of ironmasters rose to wealth and distinction from the highly profitable nature of their enterprise; while the woods all about were cut up and rendered almost impassable by the constant traffic in coal, timber, and iron-ore. Andirons and chimney-backs in old farm-houses all over the country, often bear the marks of these old Sussex ironmasters, and the railings which long encircled St. Paul's churchyard—it would be interesting, by the way, to know what became of them after their removal—were excellent specimens of the south-country ironworks.

It is probable that the existence of a large industrial population, in the kingdom of the Regni, as Sussex was called in Roman times, had a considerable influence on its subsequent history. Banded together in a strong confederation as were the ironworkers and charcoal-burners of old times—with their initiations, mysteries, signs, and passwords—they were in a measure independent of neighbouring tribes and their chiefs, and could make their own terms with invaders. And the iron kingdom seems to have been left to its own rulers as feudatories to the Emperors of Rome, and the same inscription which records the existence of the guild of smiths or ironworkers, gives the name of one of these native rulers, Cogidubnus, although in its Romanised form it is difficult to say to what race or people this peculiar name belongs. The county shows, too, a peculiar form of division which probably dates from its existence as an independent British kingdom. The Saxon hundred, with its local court, is replaced by the Rape, peculiar to Sussex as the Lathe is to Kent,

and there is a topographical fitness about these Rapes which has preserved them as territorial divisions down to the present day. The name is probably Scandinavian, for the Hrepp is a territorial division in Iceland. But the division itself is probably earlier in date than any Scandinavian invasion of importance. Each Rape, it is said, has its castle, river, and forest, generally, too, its abbey; and at the Norman conquest, William's chief barons took the leadership of the various Rapes, just as the Saxon or Danish chieftains had done before them. In the western part of the county we have the Rapes of Chichester, Arundel, and Bramber; to the east the county is subdivided into the Rapes of Lewes, Hastings, and, last of all, Pevensey.

In its present state Pevensey is but an insignificant village, with a few hundred inhabitants, although retaining traces of former importance in its court-house, or town-hall, and in the possession of its municipal dignitaries in the way of mayor and jurats. Close to the village, on the rising ground, are the ruins of the Norman castle, which occupied a corner only of the walled space that was once the site of the Roman-British town of Anderida. Recent excavations have revealed the ground-plan of the Roman foundations, and numerous finds of coins testify to the ancient importance of this wasted city. The record of its fate is still extant in the Saxon chronicle, which relates how, in the year 491, Ella and Cissa besieged Andredes Ceaster, and slew all that dwelt therein.

At that time, no doubt, a considerable inlet occupied the south front of the city, and formed a spacious harbour, for on that side the foundations of the Roman walls are altogether wanting. All trace of the harbour has now disappeared. Sand and shingle choked up the estuary, and the ancient walls have been left high and dry by the retiring sea. But the harbour was still in existence when the strong Norman castle was built from the stones and bricks of the earlier fortifications, and, as a post of communication with the opposite shores of Normandy, the castle had considerable importance.

There was something like retributive justice in the fact that this site, the scene of such a foul and ferocious deed of slaughter by the founders of the Saxon kingdom, should witness the landing of the scourge of the Saxon race in the shape of William of Normandy and his adventurous horde. We have a graphic picture of the

scene in the Bayeux Tapestry. A thousand ships were there, some anchored in the bay, others drawn up on the sands, or lying against the gaunt and broken walls of old Anderida. Men and horses covered the sandy slopes in orderly confusion, and knights and barons, in their steel caps and harness of ringed mail, marshalled their followers, and laid out the lines of the fortified camp that was to protect the whole array. Servants and camp-followers built up the tents and booths, and cooks and scullions prepared the feast which was to celebrate the successful landing of the host on the shores of the promised land.

Not many years after, the foundations of the massive Norman castle were laid, and Pevensey became a strong link in the chain that bound England to its Norman Kings. It was something of a national victory, as well as a revenge for Hastings fight, when an English army under William Rufus stormed the Norman stronghold, and made prisoner the hated Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, who had done more than any other man to make the Norman yoke a burden to the English people. Another Norman invasion had been planned—a fleet with its freight of Norman chivalry had hovered about the Saxon shore, with the intent of aiding the Norman party in England to seat Duke Robert on the throne. But the vigour of the Red King, and the zeal of the English in rallying to his cause, combined with the sloth and irresolution of Duke Robert, brought the scheme to ignominious failure.

A strong royal castle Pevensey remained for centuries, besieged more than once, and changing hands with the changing fortunes of succeeding dynasties. Under the house of Lancaster the castle became a royal prison. The widow of Henry the Fourth, accused of the practice of sorcery and magic, became a prisoner on this lonely shore, and remained at Pevensey for three or four years. After that time the castle was abandoned to decay.

The village or its neighbouring liberty may boast of having given to the world a person who, if not exactly illustrious, succeeded in making some figure in his day. This was Andrew Borde, the earliest of our comic writers, whose jest-book in black-letter is the original of "Joe Miller". Andrew was once a monk of the Carthusian priory, which has left its remains in the London Charterhouse, and on the dissolution of the priory by Henry the Eighth, he entered the world again,

and partly quack, partly charlatan, and partly merry jester, he extended his reputation far and wide at fairs and markets, and, it is said, was the original Merry Andrew, who has given his name to the general family of clowns. It is Andrew who first records the pleasant doings of the wise men of Gotham, and the historian of Pevensey lays a well-founded claim to the wise men in question, as racy of the author's native soil.

According to Mr. Lower, then, the Gotham famous for its wise men is not the little country village in the wolds of Nottinghamshire, but a manor-house of that name, not far from Pevensey. At this manor-house, then the property of Thomas, Lord Dacre, met in the twenty-fourth year of the reign of Henry the Eighth, some of the chief men of the district—the Abbot of Bayham, the priors of Lewes and Michilham, and Lord Dacre himself—to contrive means for putting down fishing by unauthorised persons within the waters of their jurisdiction. Against these unpopular measures the satirist directed his ridicule, and many old jokes were furbished up to meet the occasion.

If we follow the boundaries of the Rape of Pevensey, we shall find that, like the other Sussex Rapes, it is indeed ripped or torn right across the country—across the grain of its natural divisions—and embraces a strip of shore and level marshland, a strip of down and hilly pasture, and a strip of weald or forest wild. It may be noted, too, that each Rape encloses some main highway to the coast, which it was no doubt the duty of its chief officer to defend and keep open.

We have a fair view of the Rape of Pevensey in following that branch of the Brighton Railway which connects Eastbourne with East Grinstead.

Although Eastbourne itself was but a small fishing-village half a century ago, and owes its present importance chiefly to its attractions as a watering-place, yet it was in earlier times a market-town of some little traffic, and enjoyed a certain amount of prosperity as a great smuggling centre. The noble promontory of Beachy Head, close by, was often the scene of smuggling adventure, and each gap and hollow in the great wall of cliffs could tell its own story of cargoes run, and custom-house cruisers eluded. When a smuggling craft was lying off the coast, the fact would be known by a kind of secret telegraphy at every fishing hamlet and seamen's rendezvous. Each

customs-officer would be closely watched, and as he ground his cutlass at the village smithy would be assailed by a fire of jokes and sarcasms from the bystanders, all in the secret of the coming run. Usually some specious informer contrived to put the revenue officials on a false scent, and, when the coast was clear, the signal was given by flashing the priming of a pistol, or, at a later date, when more care was required, by the striking of flint and steel. A fixed light, as of a lamp, was a warning of danger—as in the ballad of Will Watch, the Bold Smuggler, a ballad that may still be heard crooned by old Sussex heroes :

Will stood out till the night came on darksome and dreary,

Then to crowd every sail he piped up each hand ;

But a light soon espied, 'twas a signal uncheery,

A signal that warned him to bear from the land.

On the summit of Beachy Head the smugglers had established a regular platform, where they planted their derrick, and thus hauled up their cargo over the face of the dizzy height. Mr. Banks, in his amusing and trustworthy history of the Sussex smugglers, relates a pleasant incident connected with the locality. One very dark night, when a cargo was to be derricked over the cliff near Burling Gap, by some mistake the smugglers landed their goods before the last coast-guardsmen had left the beach. The scouts, perceiving him, as he strolled unconsciously towards the spot, gave silent and timely notice, and the whole party, retreating hastily into their boat, pushed off unseen. In the confusion, the smugglers either forgot to give the usual signal—a jerk of the rope—to their confederates on the top of the cliff, or the signal was unnoticed ; so that, in passing along, the coastguard actually ran against the basket, with its load of kegs, and, not knowing how it was suspended, or what were its contents, he began pulling at the rope, when he felt the basket begin to ascend. Endeavouring to hold the basket down by main force, the coastguardsmen was suddenly swayed off his legs, and carried up with such velocity that he was afraid to loose his hold. Although the cliff was three hundred feet high, in a few minutes he was hoisted to the summit, and tumbled out headlong with the brandy-kegs into the midst of the smugglers. Retaining his presence of mind, he fired off his pistol, as an alarm, when the smugglers vanished like an apparition, leaving ten

ankers of brandy, and the whole derricking apparatus, behind them.

Another noted smuggling depôt was Parson Darby's Hole, a natural cavern in the chalk, which, according to tradition, was once occupied by the parson of a neighbouring parish, who, driven to distraction by the railing of a shrewish wife, abandoned to his unkind partner the comforts of the parsonage, and found peace in this primitive hermitage among the rocks. Possibly enough Parson Darby was in with the smugglers, and the shrewish wife only a blind; and an amplification of the story which credits the parson with showing a light from his cell, for the benefit of passing vessels, rather strengthens this hypothesis.

A still more noted spot on the coast was Crowlink—a name so associated with successful smuggling adventures, that the spirit-shops in London were accustomed openly to advertise their best Hollands gin as “genuine Crowlink”.

If we follow the coast-line to the eastwards, the flat levels of Pevensy Marsh are soon succeeded by the bold but decaying cliffs of Hastings, and the ridges of the sandy downs which stretch away inland towards the forest country. But St. Leonard's stands in the way with no particular history of its own, but interesting to those who may remember it—say forty years ago, when the place seemed to be a melancholy example of o'er-vaulting ambition in the way of building speculation. It was laid out by Decimus Burton—the architect of the arch that now stands sideways on Constitution Hill—and of late years has realised the original designs of its builders, and from a warning, the town has become an example of successful enterprise, and a model for imitation.

Old Hastings is still to be made out among modern villas and terraces, the quaint high-street climbing the hill towards the sheltered nook where the old church once drew together its little flock of fishermen and tradesmen. It is still a sight to see the fishing-boats come in, and take the beach on a rough, breezy day; and in running a boat up out of the surf there are few to match the Hastings beachmen. Here, too, there was once a port of some consequence; but like most of the harbours along the coast, it has disappeared beneath the shingle, and a collier now and then, that lies upon the beach, and discharges its grimy cargo into the carts of the neighbourhood, is all that remains of the foreign trade of Hastings.

The history of Hastings as a cinque port is bound up with that of Rye and Winchelsea.

“God save old England and the towne of Rye!” is the old motto, from which you may infer that the town of Rye was regarded by its inhabitants as no inconsiderable dependency of the realm. And Rye—perched upon its hill, with the wide marshes stretching below and the channel winding out towards the sea, with a few masts clustered in the haven under the hill, and the changing sea-line beyond—presents an aspect altogether quaint and unusual. There is nothing decayed or out of date in the appearance of the town itself, which has indeed a brisk and flourishing look about it. It brews, it banks, it deals in wool and hops. It seems quite possible to make money in Rye, and to spend it, too, to the best advantage. Then there is the old castle with its towers, whose foundations were laid by William de Ypres, Earl of Kent, some time in the thirteenth century, and which has since done duty as the town gaol. Below is an old battery, with a gun or two mounted and looking over at the sea.

A good many years ago this battery was looked after by an old gunner, named Peter Blue—his surname, no doubt, derived from having formerly served in the Royal Navy—and this veteran used to relate how, in the great French war, the people of Rye were alarmed by the roar of guns from the sea, and presently made out a French cruiser that, with all sail spread, was chasing an English brig, and firing every now and then a shot from her forward guns. Peter was at church at the time, with most of the other solid burghers of Rye, but was called out to witness the sea-fight. The tide was high, the wind was blowing off-shore, and the ships stood close in, each using its best endeavours to get to windward of the other. Peter, looking to his guns, judged that he could train the Long Tom to bear upon the saucy Frenchman, and presently the old castle spoke out with a gruff bark, and a round shot went skimming over the sea. Now, if that shot did not hit the Frenchman, it went near enough to frighten him; and he bore up and discontinued the chase. This was the one great conflict of Peter's tenure of command at the old castle; and, although he was not promoted to be first lieutenant, yet he received a substantial gratification from the owners or the underwriters of the

vessel which he probably saved from capture.

This was the last of all the brushes the old town had with the French. More serious were her conflicts in earlier times. In 1378 the town was taken by the French and sacked and burnt, and seventy years later again suffered the same calamity. With the beginning of the religious wars with France, Rye began to be looked upon as the haven of refuge for refugee Protestants flying from the cruel persecutions and massacres of their native land. In 1582, or ten years after the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, there were one thousand five hundred and thirty-four French refugees in Rye. In 1589 Henri Quatre was at Dieppe on the opposite shore, and hearing that Queen Elizabeth was then at Rye, he writes that he is resolved to go over and stay a week with her, and to take that very opportunity of kissing her hand.

It is not recorded whether the King of France and Queen of England actually met at Rye as proposed. But continued reinforcements were dispatched to Henry, as he was fighting for his crown in the plains of the Pays de Caux, and most of these passed through Rye as the nearest port to Dieppe, which was almost the only port that held out for Henry against the League and the Spaniards.

Of the French colony there are many descendants settled, not only in Rye, but in the country round about. Some of the old Nonconformist endowments in Kent and Sussex owe their existence to the bequests of these French Protestants, who favoured rather the Puritan than the Episcopal party in England. It is curious, too, to note that during our own civil wars the Protestants of Normandy were active in collecting and forwarding arms and ammunition for the Parliamentary party, much of which was landed and forwarded through the Channel ports.

With all this intimate connection with France it is not to be wondered at that Rye was a great place for smuggling. Wesley writes of the people of Rye, whom he visited in 1773: "They do many things gladly, but they will not part with the accursed thing—smuggling."

Closely connected with Rye were the fortunes of Winchelsea, a mere village now, crowning a wooded height, where an ancient gateway across a quiet country road gives access only to more cornfields and hop-grounds. This is New Winchelsea. Old Winchelsea lies under the sea, and was

once a nest of staunch and fierce seamen whom enemies were wont to term pirates.

The thirteenth century seems to have been a terrible time both by land and sea. There were earthquakes, mighty storms, and inundations that altered the face of sea and land. It was in the terrible spring of 1236 when great torrents of rain fell during the months of January, February, and part of March. Then the Thames broke into the Palace of Westminster, and people paddled in boats through Westminster Hall. Then all the Marsh was in peril, and the sea broke through embankments that had withstood the waves since the days of old Rome. Then it was that old Winchelsea got its first savage buffet from the sea.

But Winchelsea was spared that time, for, in 1240, there was still an arsenal there for the King's galleys, and a lighthouse. But, ten years after, the town was assailed by another dreadful tempest—"a tempest of wind so huge and mighty, the like was never heard of by men then alive. The sea flowed twice without ebbing, roaring so as to be heard a far distance from the shore. At Winchelsea three hundred houses and some churches were drowned."

After the wind and the waves came the destroying hand of man, and completed the work of desolation. In the great contest between Simon de Montfort and the Crown, Winchelsea was strong for Simon—Sir Simon the Righteous, as he was called by the country-people, who seemed to discern in him, one hardly knows how, a champion of a better order of things. After old Simon was slain at Evesham, young Simon, escaping from Kenilworth, took refuge at Winchelsea, and, arming and manning ships there, made a kind of irregular war which got the reputation of piracy. Then the victorious young Prince Edward came down upon the unhappy town, stormed its walls, and slew its chief inhabitants. That was in 1266, and eleven years afterwards, the Prince, now King Edward the First, visited the town in person. What he had destroyed was past mending, so he resolved to build a new town, and with all the energy of his nature he set to work, acquired a barren, sandy rock, washed by the sea on two of its sides—it was a rabbit-warren then, with a strip of meadow in one corner—and here he laid out the ground-plan of his new city. And then the King issued his proclamation to mankind in general, including the surviving citizens of Winchelsea, to

come and settle there and build on the sites which he had provided.

The King's invitation was backed up by a final tempest and an inundation by the sea, perhaps the worst of the century, which, in 1287, stopped the mouth of the river Rother at Romney, and turned the main channel of the river into Rye Harbour, finally drowning out Winchelsea and sending its inhabitants fleeing for their lives. Happily there was a city of refuge for them, actually waiting to be inhabited, and from that time New Winchelsea began to rise in earnest. And we are fortunate in having handed down to us an exact record of the state of the town, a complete directory, as full and complete as Kelly's of to-day—streets and inhabitants all set down—a perfect picture of a municipal town in the twentieth year of Edward the First.

Where are they all now, these streets and squares, these churches, priories, and public buildings? A hamlet only meets the eye, with here and there a pleasant dwelling, as if in a complete rural solitude. And yet, among fields, and hedges, and enclosures, the lines of streets may still be traced. Here are underground crypts, where the citizens once stored the wines they imported from France; here the broken arches of a priory, surrounded by pleasant lawns and flower-gardens; there a venerable but unsightly building is pointed out as the old town gaol.

But, indeed, the city had no sooner risen than it began to fall, although at one time it was reckoned amongst the chief ports of the kingdom, as is testified by an old ballad about pilgrimages:

For where they take the see,
At Sandwyche or at Winchelsea,
At Bristow or where that it bee.

The town had some rude shocks, to be sure. In 1359 the French landed, spoiled the town, and carried off all the handsome young women they could lay hands upon, while many of the citizens were butchered as they assisted at mass in the parish church. In 1380, John Vian—in whom we may recognise John de Vienne—spoiled the town once more, although it was too substantial to be burnt. On the other hand, the Winchelsea men executed strong reprisals on the French coast, and won a good deal of plunder in their turn.

It was no violent catastrophe that ruined the town, but a slow decay. The sea ceased to wash the rock on which the town was built. In Elizabeth's time the

town had been abandoned as a place of trade, but presented so many good houses and fine streets that the Queen called it another London. And then we hear little more about the place till we find it overgrown by the country, a place of fields and gardens.

Here and there a few old traditions linger, such as that of the Vale Well, now St. Leonard's Well, of which if one drinks he never leaves Winchelsea. But here we must pause, lest it be thought that the chronicler has been drawing from that same well.

MAGIC AND SORCERY.

ANOTHER CHAPTER FROM THE ROMANCE OF SCIENCE.

THE difficulty of a writer on magic is to treat the subject so as to keep a just mean between that extreme scepticism which would annihilate all religion on the one hand, and that extravagant credulity which would give the reins to the most stupid of superstitions on the other.

Magic includes beliefs and practices based on fact and fancy; religious doctrines and scientific theories are involved in it in almost inextricable confusion. It is a world created by priests, poets, philosophers, and people working sometimes together, sometimes independently of, or even in opposition to, one another, to the same end; and is intimately bound up with the intellectual and moral life of every nation and race on the earth, whether savage or civilised.

Magic, inclusive of sorcery, is, generally speaking, the science and philosophy of men in a primitive state of culture and civilisation. No race of men exists, and we may go even so far as to say that no race of men ever existed, without some form of magic. Everywhere the purposes sought to be effected by magic may be summed up as health, wealth, and long life. The means used to bring about these ends have a corresponding similarity, and consist generally of methods supposed to be powerful for forcing good or evil spirits to carry out the intentions of the operators. The methods are made up partly of rites and ceremonies by which spirits of an inferior order are subjected to the control of other spirits of a superior order, and partly of the use of natural substances, whose properties (which depend upon supernatural beings) have been discovered by chance.

In regard to the magic of Western Europe, since the establishment of Christianity, some singular evidence has been forthcoming from the discoveries made on the sites of ancient Nineveh and Babylon by Sir Henry Layard and other explorers, followed by the investigations of scholars of the present day based on these discoveries. A whole literature has been disinterred, and its contents have been partially deciphered. This literature consists of tablets of clay, written on in a cuneiform character, and is made up of treatises on theology, magic, astronomy, agriculture, and mathematics, most of it upwards of three thousand years old.

The magical treatises consist of nothing but Litanies, indicating the rites used for the expulsion of evil demons, and for salvation from their operations. The descriptions given of these evil demons show clearly that they were what we nowadays term diseases, such as fever, plague, leprosy, and what not, as also poisons. Diseases were looked upon by the writers of these tablets, as they are to this day by uncivilised people, as evil spirits which took possession of their victims, and it was imagined that by the utterance of proper words, and by using suitable rites, they could be expelled, or prevented from causing mischief, or that good spirits could be brought to operate against them.

Painful fever, violent fever,
The fever which never leaves a man;
Unlimited fever,
The lingering fever, the malignant fever,
Spirit of the Heaven conjure it! Spirit of the
Earth conjure it!

The above is a specimen from a magical treatise of twenty-eight formulæ, given by M. Lenormant in his book on Chaldean Magic. In another of these formulæ, some very well known witchcraft superstitions, as the charming away of a person's life by means of a waxen image, the evil eye, and the chance utterance of a phrase or word of ominous import, are alluded to.

He who forges images, he who bewitches,
The malevolent eye, the evil eye,
The malevolent mouth, the malevolent tongue,
The malevolent lip, the finest sorcery,
Spirit of the Heaven conjure it! Spirit of the
Earth conjure it!

These superstitions turn up in the most unexpected places, even to-day, to those able to recognise them. Among these remains of ancient lore are found instructions for making amulets and talismans, as also some of the talismans themselves. The amulets and talismans were of various

kinds. In general they were figures or images in what were supposed to be the likenesses of the spirits, and were either worn on the person or placed in certain positions to ward off the attacks of evil demons. The monster winged bulls and lions, found at Nineveh and Babylon, belong to this category.

The gods, or good demons, were supposed to remain where their images were set up; thus these monstrous forms were really, in the eyes of the ancient Assyrians, the spiritual guards.

Bulls and lions carved in stone,
Which with their majestic mien
Deter wicked enemies from approaching
The guardians of the footsteps, the saviours
Of the path of the King who constructed them,
Right and left I placed them at the gates.

Some of the talismans are grotesque figures made up of parts of various animals. The odd reason for making such figures is that the Chaldeans held the demons, which they represented, to have been the first of living things which came into existence when the world issued from chaos. The reason for making and wearing such ugly images was still more odd, it being that the demons had only to see themselves as they were to turn away in horror and disgust. A rather singular anticipation of Pope's adage:

Vice is a monster of such hideous mien,
That to be shunned needs only to be seen.

It may be incidentally remarked that the practice of wearing jewellery, especially as finger-rings or necklaces, is really a survival from the ancient practice of carrying about amulets and talismans to protect the person from the assaults of evil demons, and as a continual propitiation of the gods.

The belief in the efficacy of talismans is not yet altogether extinct, for the present writer, only a short time ago, had shown to him a recently-written manuscript, for which the possessor had paid a guinea. This manuscript was a list of talismans, with figures and instructions for making them, selected apparently from Agrippa's *Occult Philosophy* and Barrett's *Magus*. If the efficacy of the talismans depended on the recognition by the spirits of their names, it is to be presumed that they would not be found very effective, as the unwary scribe had made a sad mess by mistaking the Hebrew letters in which the names were written.

According to the best authorities, the old clay treatises on magic found at Nineveh and Babylon are not written in

Assyrian, a language allied to the Hebrew and Arabic, but in Akkad, a tongue belonging to the family of languages spoken by the Tartar races, such as Laplanders, Samoyedes, Chinese, etc. This fact is very significant, as the greater part of the tribes and nations who speak these languages are inveterate believers in magic and sorcery. Among the tribes which yet remain pagan, the shaman, or wizard, is the religious minister; and even when, like the Chinese, a higher form of thought has taken hold, the ancient Nature-worship, of which magic and sorcery are the expressions, still keeps its ground. Lapland witches, all through the Middle Ages, were reckoned the most powerful, and used to do a somewhat extensive business in selling fair winds to their neighbours and other Scandinavian seamen. Speaking of seamen and their superstitions, a child's caul is still accounted by many an efficacious magical preventive of shipwreck, and such things are still advertised for sale.

The Akkad magical doctrines were considerably modified by the astronomico-theology of the Assyrians, who seem to have been the originators of the idea that the planets and signs of the zodiac were ruled by angels. This notion played a great part in the angelology and demonology of later times. Those curious on this point will find a sufficiently elaborate account in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. The doctrines were transmitted to Europe—losing nothing on the way—through the Neo-Platonists and Gnostics of Alexandria, until, in the early days of Christianity, they became most influential factors in moulding Christian thought.

Another point in the history of magic must not be overlooked. A large proportion of the religious offices of the Greeks and Romans consisted of augury and soothsaying, and many of the temples, as those of Apollo and Esculapius, were, in their way, hospitals for the cure of the sick. The priests and priestesses of these temples, being largely dependent on voluntary offerings for their support, would have to add to any natural sagacity they might possess as much practical knowledge as they could gather, if they meant to keep up the credit of their gods. So there is every reason for believing that a large amount of practical knowledge—such as weather-wisdom, the properties of drugs, the nature of diseases, and even of the less easily obtained knowledge of some of the principles of action of

the physical forces—would be collected, and all this would be carried down through the ages in more or less clear tradition.

After the rise of Christianity some of the Fathers of the Church denounced the Gentile religion as a worship of demons, and, on the forcible suppression of paganism by the successors of Constantine, there happened what always does happen in such cases. Some parts of the old religions were taken up into the popular theology, and the old worship of the gods was still carried on in secret by the country people, the only difference being that the old gods were degraded into devils, and that the priests were looked upon as wizards and witches.

After the confusion consequent on the breaking up of the Roman Empire, and the settlement of the barbarians within its territories, science emerged as a farrago of Chaldean magical and astrological superstitions, Platonic metaphysics, popular myths, and more or less clearly ascertained natural facts. It was therefore looked upon with extreme suspicion, and scientific enquiry was exceedingly risky to those who followed it. Even Popes like Sylvester the Second were not free from being suspected of unholy arts, in consequence of having scientific tastes. The lot of students of science was at that time not one to be envied. They were often banned by the Church, driven from one hiding-place to another whilst alive, and after they were dead their characters were libelled. They entered on their studies with fear and trembling: perhaps, even they themselves thought, to this eternal peril of their souls. Devotion to science during the Middle Ages was an act of sublime self-renunciation. It was the certain loss of happiness, as far as this world was concerned, and to the majority of contemporaries even of that in the world to come. The student of those days was lucky if some strong-armed magnate took him under protection, and gave him an asylum, as sometimes was the case. Luther, stowed away for safety in the Castle of Wartburg, by the Elector of Saxony, is not an uncommon type of student-life in the Middle Ages. Not all students of science were so lucky; some, like Roger Bacon and Campanella, were imprisoned, others, like Giordano Bruno and Vanini, were caught by the Inquisition and burnt. In fact, the usual fate of these pioneers of science, if they were not lucky enough to get powerful patrons,

was to be burnt, either as magicians or as atheists—that is, for having too much to do with supernatural beings, or for having too little to do with them. Even if they died a natural death, they were buried like dogs, unless they had made their peace with the Church. This is said to have happened to no less a personage than an Archbishop of York of the eleventh century, by name Girald. It is said of him that he was “a wytych, and evyl doer, as the fame tellyth, for under his pile when he deyde, in an erber was found a boke of curyous craftes, the boke hight Julius Frumeus, in that boke he redde pryvely in the under tydes, therefor unnethe the clerkes of his church wold suffre him be buried under heuene, without hovly church.” Julius Frumeus is supposed to mean Julius Firmicus, a Latin writer on astronomy. So the poor Archbishop, for trying to improve his mind, was refused Christian burial.

The popular imagination had peopled the woods, the fields, and rivers with a sometimes useful, sometimes mischievous, but always merry crew of elves, fairies, dwarfs, nixies, brownies, undines, etc., which the lugubrious imaginations of monks and churchmen duly transformed into a demon rabble. All nature thus became the seat of sorcery and witchcraft. Then, on the introduction of the plague and other epidemic diseases by the Crusaders, the utter collapse of the Crusades, and the advancing conquests of the Saracens and Turks, all society was thrown into a state of panic. And from the twelfth century downwards, came the hideous witch persecutions, the story of which forms one of the most revolting and disgraceful chapters in the history of religion and of the human mind. These persecutions struck at all classes of society—neither learning, rank, age, nor sex was spared; but their full force fell on the female sex.

During the long period of time stretching from the twelfth century to the end of the eighteenth, thousands of women, rich and poor, young and old—especially the latter—were submitted to the most frightful tortures that can be imagined or described, and then burnt alive. A large number of these were merely insane, and some were actually put to death because, having picked up a little knowledge during a long and laborious life, they had applied it to alleviating the ailments of their neighbours. In these charges of witchcraft nothing seems to have been too absurd

—such as worshipping the devil, raising storms, blighting crops, and causing diseases and death to man and beast. These charges were made mostly against crazy old women.

England has the honour of having been less infected with the witch-mania than any other country. How far this is owing to the national obtuseness to religious terrors, or to the fact that the English were too busy fighting for the Red and White Roses, it is difficult to say. The worst periods were during the reign of James the First and during the Puritan fanaticism of the Commonwealth. The last trial for witchcraft took place the same year as the foundation of the Royal Society. The last execution for witchcraft in Germany was carried out at Munich, in 1749, on Maria Renata, a nun, seventy years old. A witch was burnt in Switzerland so late as 1785, and in Spain an execution of this sort occurred later still.

Modern research goes to show that the whole of the witch superstitions were founded on debased reminiscences of ancient paganism, garbled traditions of old scientific knowledge, and the phenomena of idiocy, epilepsy, hysteria, and mania—the latter, in a great degree produced by the unsettled and disturbed state of society at that time, and grievously misunderstood.

In the year 1303, a Bishop of Coventry was accused at Rome of a series of crimes, and amongst others that he had done homage to the Evil One. It was one of the chief charges against the Knights Templar that they had renounced God and Christ, and taken to worshipping a he-goat and a black tom-cat. This he-goat is evidently no other than the ancient country god Pan—whom the shepherds used to hear with his pipe, haunting the reedy banks of the river or the woodland thicket—but degraded to be the arch-enemy of mankind, and set out with all the qualities which a depraved imagination could conceive. The prominence which the cat takes in the witch trials is also easily explainable. The cat was the emblem of Isis, or the Moon; and she is identifiable as Diana, who, as Hecate, is goddess of the subterranean or infernal world, and queen of the dead. The witches, again, are said to have held great festivals when they did homage to Satan, feasting and dancing to the notes of a fiddle made of a horse's head, or of a pipe consisting of a cat's tail. These high festivals occurred at such places as the Brocken, in Germany, which in olden times were chief seats of the

old heathen worship. They were said to have been celebrated on Friday—the day dedicated to the Norse goddess Freya or Venus. It is singular how the Moon and the planet Venus are mixed up in the old mythologies. It can only be accounted for from the influence of astrological theories. Cyprus, for instance, our most recent acquisition in the Mediterranean, was anciently a chief seat of the worship of Venus. Astrologers say that the island is “ruled” by Taurus. Now the sign Taurus is, according to them, the “house” of Venus and the “exaltation” of the Moon. Then, again, women were mostly guilty of sorcery and with dealings with unholy beings. This is merely a reminiscence of times when, among the northern nations, women were the chief soothsayers, physicians, and prophetesses. The witch inquisitors laid down the reason in their way. They said it was because of women being given to squabbling and being stiff-necked, for Eve was made from Adam’s crooked rib, and because in Eve there was want of faith; femina—woman—being derived from *fe*, faith, and *minus*, less.

The composition of the witch potions and ointments of toxicant herbs, like hemlock, henbane, belladonna, and the poppy, points to the true nature of the delusions when artificially produced.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century a few enlightened men made bold to attack the superstition of the times, but with no small danger to themselves. Among them may be mentioned Reginald Scott, in England, whose book was replied to by James the First; Wier, physician of the Duke of Cleves; and two Jesuits, Adam Tanner and Frederick Spec. But the most efficient instrument in suppressing the old superstitions of magic and witchcraft has been the progress of experimental science, and the diffusion of knowledge through the medium of the press. The miracles ascribed to the old wizards and witches have been thrown into the shade by the common practical applications of science at the present day. In spite of the strange paths into which the search for knowledge has led, the aim has always been the same—namely, to give men power over the forces of Nature, with the aid of gods and demons, if possible, in spite of them if need be. When we look upon the patient, untiring throb of the steam-engine, driving crowds of looms and spindles, at the snorting locomotive, or at the telegraph and telephone, almost annihilating space distinc-

tions, we see the speculations of the old magicians as matter-of-fact reality.

The practical scientific man of the present day is the exact analogue of the ancient magician, just as our dynamitards and others who use knowledge for purposes of mischief are the modern analogues of the old sorcerers and witches. The very existence of two-thirds of our population is dependent on the fact that the elemental forces of Nature have been reduced by human knowledge to become the servants of human will.

LOST AT THE FLAX MILL.

A STORY.

IN the beautiful district of Fannet on the coast of Donegal, near Lough Swilly—the Lake of Shadows—lived two poor families, celebrated far and wide as the best neighbours ever known or heard of. If Martin wanted a hand with his harvest, Donnelly was ready to give it, and ask no wages, and the kindness was returned when the potato-digging came on. Their wives also lived in the greatest harmony, and they were such close neighbours that they met continually, for one roof covered the two houses.

This long cabin, or rather range of cabins, stood on the banks of Mulroy, an inlet of the Atlantic, so land-locked as to look like a lake. Behind towered gigantic heather-crowned mountains; in front lay the high-road leading from the sea to Milford, the nearest market town, a winding road, hard and white from limestone, now dipping down into a valley, now mounting up a sharp hill, and always keeping close to the blue waters of Mulroy, divided from it by a shelving bank festooned with woodbine. Mulroy was studded with many islands—*islands* sacred to the “wee folks”; islands in possession of the sea-birds; islands where sleepy, broad-browed seals basked on warm evenings. Beyond Mulroy rose more mountains, the nearer hills cultivated to their summits, the more distant so pale and indistinct that they were like smoke-coloured phantoms against the sky. Errigal, a cone-shaped mountain, the last point of Irish earth seen by the emigrants as they sailed to America, and Muckish, the pig’s back, were most prominent in the range.

The Martins and Donnellys did not know that they were looking at one of the loveliest landscapes in the world. They thought Mulroy a wild, desolate place.

Sometimes the deep silence of the place was broken by the keening of mourners or chant of priests, and then the children in the cabins would run out to the road, and look up and down.

A long procession wound from the seacoast, on its way to yonder burial-ground beneath the chapel at the edge of the lake—a holy spot, marked by a forest of black wooden crosses. The priest walked first; then came the coffin, followed by a motley company—men in long grey stockings, knee-breeches, and brogues, mounted on shaggy ponies, and women seated behind them, dressed in homespun and scarlet head-gear. The keening woke the mountain echoes, the fairy glen throwing back the sound to the flax-mill, that stood, gaunt and grim, by the roadside; then the crying and chanting died away, and flocks of curlew and plover, circling overhead, sang a shrill requiem. Two of the children were wont to follow the procession—Teague Martin and Mary Donnelly. They were inseparable, toddling hand-in-hand to school, hand-in-hand to chapel, playing together, herding the cows together on the knowes. They would follow the procession as far as the flax-mill, a mile from their own doors, and would stay there to play. The gossips of the country remarked the tender friendship of the children, and foretold that it would end in matrimony.

The first separation of these little friends took place when they were thirteen years old, and Teague was hired by a farmer. Mary moped and fretted when he was gone, wandering sadly to the flax-mill, their old play-place, and then wandering back again with her head hanging down. But she found some consolation in knitting his socks, washing his clothes, and carrying the little bundle to him on a Saturday at the farmhouse.

Things did not turn out as the neighbours expected. The friends did not become lovers; they remained devoted friends, but they married strangers. Years went by. The old Martins and Donnellys were "gathered to their fathers", and Mary and her husband, and Teague and his wife, lived on in the old cabins, "inunder the roof wi' other," and the good neighbourhood was the same as ever. Time passed; they grew middle-aged, then old; the days when they had played at the flax-mill were very far away.

One day Mary was taken very ill—so ill that the priest was sent for. She

received the last rites of the Church, and then she asked for Teague. He was at a distance—gone to Milford with cattle to sell—would not return home till late. Mary watched the door as long as her sight lasted.

"Is there no word of Teague?" was her constant question. His name was the last upon her lips.

A woeful man was Teague when he found his old friend gone. He walked beside her husband after the coffin, and saw her laid low in the churchyard mould, and then he came back to the cabins, the truest mourner she had. But work had to be done, though his heart was heavy, and the next evening he took his flax to the mill.

As he jogged along the limestone road in his cart, he was suddenly aware of a figure seated beside him on the bundles of flax. How had she got there? He thrilled with terror, and it was all he could do to look round and see who was his companion. An old woman? Yes; and her red shawl, the grey hair, the features, the blue eyes, which had never lost their brightness, all reminded him of Mary. He looked closer. It was Mary certainly, and he must conquer his fear and speak to her for the sake of their lifelong friendship. Must Mary be a restless wanderer because her old comrade failed her? No—a thousand times no! So, with a tremendous effort, he conquered his dread.

"Mary darlin', is it you?" he faltered.

"It is, Teague dear; it is."

"An' what is it, Mary, that's keepin' you frae your rest? Sure you had the priest, an' he gave you the viaticum?"

The voice he knew so well answered in accents that pierced his heart:

"There's nae rest for me. I flew up to the gate of heaven, but I wouldna be let in, an' I'm flyin' about the world in the cold an' the rain, or lyin' aback o' thon thorn-bush. Think on me, Teague, in the night-time when you ones is comfortable by the fireside, an' pity me, an' help me for the sake of we'er old friendship."

"Help you!" cried the poor man; "sure I'd gie my heart's blood to help you; but how is it to be done? An' why wad you no' be let into heaven, a good livin' woman like you?"

"I'll tell you, Teague," replied the spectre; "that's what I'm here to tell you. It's true that I went about my duty regular, an' knelt wi' the congregation in the chapel Sunday after Sunday, an' I

was respectit for a good livin' woman; but in all my lifetime I never prayed. My lips would be movin', but my thoughts would be away. When I was a young girl I'd be thinkin' of my sweetheart, or my dress, or the dance at the fair; when I was a married woman I'd be frettin' about the childer, thinkin' ane o' them would fall into the fire, or another would be drowned in the well when I was out; an' when I was old there was frets an' anxieties still; but, anyway, in all them years I never prayed, so I canna be let in."

"Mary, Mary, poor soul! What is it I can do for ye?"

"Listen, Teague. Go to his reverence, Father Dan, an' pay him to offer up twa masses for my sinful soul; but the money——"

"The money, Mary? It's here," touching his pocket, "aye, if it was twist as much—it's here. But how will I know that the masses is accepted, an' that ye'll be let into heaven?"

The figure began to fade away, and the voice was fainter.

"If I am forgiven, the night after the second mass is said for me, I'll come to you in the form of a white bird, an' I'll stand in the window, at the foot of your bed, an' sing you a beautiful hymn before I fly away to heaven."

The voice died away softly, and, just as they reached the flax-mill, the figure disappeared. Weary though Teague was that night, he went straight to the priest after supper, and told him the strange tale. Father Dan took the money, and promised to say the masses, encouraging Teague to hope that all would be well with Mary.

"Come back an' tell me if she appears to you again," said he.

Some days later he had a second visit from Teague.

"Well, my good man," he began, "did you get any word from that poor soul?"

"I did, your reverence—I did."

"An' how is it wi' her now?"

"Thanks be to your reverence an' the Lord, she's got to her rest now! It was in the night-time, an' I was lyin' on my bed wi' the blessed rosary in my hands, prayin' constant, when I heard the flutterin' o' wings at the window, an' then a beautiful hymn, like ane o' them hymns that is sung in the chapel on Easter Day, was sung, an' so I knowed Mary was going to heaven."

"Did she speak, Teague?"

"Feen a word. The hymn sounded

fainter an' fainter, till it was like a wee gentle sough o' wind off the Lough, an' I was content in my mind to think that Mary was at her rest."

The flax-mill on the Mulroy road was the scene of another ghostly appearance. The reader must transport himself in imagination across the ferry opposite the mill, to the farms lying beneath the hills, from whence there was a good view of Teague and Mary's house, and the wild range of mountains behind it.

Rose Dillon was the prettiest girl in the whole country, and she had many admirers among the rich farmers—any one of whom would have pleased her parents better than the suitor she chose. James Majilton was a handsome young man, but he was not rich—he had only the flax-mill and a poor, small farm and three cows. How vexatious it was that Rose should set her affections upon him, when she could have been mistress of a slated house and fourteen cows!

Father Dan was entreated to use his influence, and he did say a word or two, representing the worldly advantages of Mike and Sam, Teddy and John. But it was all to no purpose. Rose blushed, and persisted in clinging to James.

"Put your commands on her, your reverence; she willna go against the Church," said her father.

"No, no; that is not to be done," replied the priest. "James is a good boy, he pays his dues regular, an' is diligent at his duty, an' obedient to his Church. He deserves a good wife. Let Rose have him."

After that, opposition ceased of course, and a day was fixed for the wedding. Plenty of corned beef and cabbage, bacon and eggs, tea and whisky, were provided; two fiddlers were engaged; the neighbours were invited to the feast; and all was going merry as a marriage-bell, when James was suddenly taken ill. The priest was sent for, and then a messenger went across the ferry to summon Rose. Alas! there was no time to say farewell. James was unconscious when Rose reached his bedside. To describe her wild grief would be impossible. Hanging over the corpse, she let her tears rain upon his placid face, unheeding the grave reproofs of the women.

"Why do you be cryin' that way, Rose Dillon? Sure you know that your lamentin' will keep him frae his rest."

They alluded to the belief of the poor Roman Catholics that the inordinate grief of survivors troubles the departed soul, and weighs it down so that it is unable to soar towards heaven.

"Wad ye keep the poor fellow flyin' about the world?" asked her grandmother, who had been brought across the ferry to attend the wake. "Sure, sure ye wouldna be that cruel to the poor boy that loved ye true? Lay back thon sheet, girl, an' drap nae mair tears over him. I ha' knowed it done."

And then followed a long list of examples, the experience of close upon ninety years.

The "wake-house", as the mill was called, while James lay there holding his last party, was quite full, and men and women listened to Grannie Dillon respectfully, shaking their heads gravely and uttering many an "Och, hoch! and Alaise-a-nie!" the while. There was good cheer at this last entertainment of James's—his cousins had seen to that. Tea, and bread-and-butter, and whisky were provided in abundance, and there were plates of cut tobacco, bundles of clean pipes, and supplies of snuff for all comers. The visitors went one by one over to the bed, and turning down the sheet, took a last look at the corpse, using the formula in vogue on these occasions: "Dear, but he's very like himsel'!" and then anecdotes were related respecting the departed, and the company gradually became cheerful—all but Rose.

James was laid to rest in the chapel graveyard at the edge of Mulroy, and the plover and curlew circled over his head, and the work of the world went on as before.

The flax-mill was worked by his cousins, and Teague Martin and the other farmers repaired to it with their loads. Grannie Dillon spun her yarn; her daughter-in-law milked and churned; the farmer ploughed his land—all settled down to their daily toil except Rose. She continued to cry incessantly, regardless of remonstrance or rebuke.

It happened that her father followed her down to the ferry one evening, and found her gazing at the flax-mill so fixedly that she did not hear his footsteps.

"What is it you see there, girl?" he asked.

"Oh, father, do you no see?"

"Naething ava, Rose."

"It's James that's standin' yonder on the shore, lookin' over at me, an' whiles he lifts his hand an' waves to me. He's there every evenin', an' I still come here to meet him. It's the only tryst we can hold now."

"There's naething there but the ould walls o' the mill, an' the whin bushes, an' the boat drawn up on the shore. Come awa to your work, girl, an' help your poor mother that's slavin' in the byre her lane."

Rose went back to her work that time; but she was always escaping to the ferry, and always found gazing at something others could not see. It soon became known in the country that James was a troubled soul, kept from rest by his sweetheart's tears; and Father Dan himself was called upon to interfere. What he said—what weighty arguments he used, what commands he laid upon Rose, were not known; but she listened and obeyed, and her tears were dried.

But she faded away from that time; and, although James visited the mill no more, it was believed he was beckoning to her. A year had not passed before the crones, meeting one another, said:

"Do you know what I'm just done hearing? Rose Dillon's got to her rest!"

It was true. The chapel-bell was knelling for her; she was gone to meet James upon the farther shore.

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